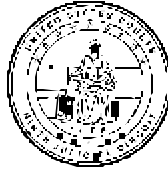


Media Release
United States Courts for the Ninth Circuit

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**Ninth Circuit's Evaluation Committee
Recommends Improvements to Processing Appeals**

The Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals has released a 13-page interim report of its Evaluation Committee which recommends nearly two dozen ways to improve court operations. A summary of the committee's principal recommendations is attached.

Chief Judge Procter Hug, Jr. of the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals advised: "I formed this committee about a year ago to carefully examine our court's policies, practices, and structure. We wanted to make sure that we'd left no stone unturned in our efforts to do the best job possible to serve those who have cases that come before our court on appeal. Judge Thompson's committee has done an excellent and thorough job and we will strive to institute as many of these reforms as quickly as feasible for the benefit of those who appear before us."

The committee looked at the court's en banc rehearing process, the consistency of its decisions, regional sensitivity and outreach, collegiality, and a variety of ways to improve case processing and efficiency. A few of its key recommendations included increasing the number of judges who sit on the en banc court from 11 to 13; developing special rules to guide attorneys in contacting the court if they feel their case has been unduly delayed; placing one judge from the Northwest on every three-judge panel that hears a case from the Northwest; and increasing the number of hearings and bench-bar meetings in cities where the court does not ordinarily sit.

Senior Circuit Judge David R. Thompson of San Diego, who chaired the ten-member committee that included appellate and trial judges, a law professor, and a practitioner, observed: "The committee has worked hard and has investigated very closely a number of perceived concerns that had been brought to our attention by members of the bar and through the White Commission hearings. While we still have more work to do, this report sets out a series of recommendations that will go a long way toward responding to some of those concerns—and the court has already adopted a number of them."

A copy of the 13-page interim report is available online on the court's Web site at www.ca9.uscourts.gov. An executive summary is attached.

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